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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 000321

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SUBJECT: LETTER FROM PRESIDENT SACA TO PRESIDENT BUSH

REF: SAN SALVADOR 298

Classified By: CDA Michael A. Butler, Reason 1.4 (b)

11. (C) On February 17, Embassy received a cover letter (dated February 10) from President Saca to President Bush, thanking the President for the opportunity to meet with him in Washington to discuss issues "relating to the security and stability of both our countries." The letter was accompanied by a two page document, in bullet form, alluding to the issues Saca intends to raise with the President. (Note: The cover letter and document have been transmitted to WHA/CEN and the NSC. End Note.)

12. (C) The following is Post summary of the substantive document:

TOPICS OF INTEREST FOR EL SALVADOR AND THE UNITED STATES

Security and Justice

-Bilateral extradition treaty: Points to the negative effect of criminal deportations and the need to count on a bilateral instrument so that Salvadoran deportees with criminal records "complete" their sentences in El Salvador. Alludes to "provision" of resources for programs focused on prevention and re-insertion.

-Need for permanent cooperation in the fight against organized crime. Relationship exists between gangs and narco-activity and narco-activity and terrorism and they are links that undermine democratic systems. The rise in El Salvador of groups associated with international terrorism (i.e. Hizbullah, FARC) and linked to the FMLN. Also linkages with Venezuela.

Regional Stability

-Ideological division in Latin America. Influence and financing of positions antagonistic to the United States. Axis of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Tendency toward the left in Honduras and Panama. Serious worry about Guatemala. Tendency toward polarization and social violence in El Salvador instigated by the FMLN and leftist groups. The 2009 elections in El Salvador as a challenge for the United States and to democratic governance. There are links tying the FMLN to Cuba and Venezuela. Ideological polarization points to the participation of only two actors: ARENA and the FMLN. The lesson of the recent Nicaragua experience: need to unify conservative, democratic forces.

-The death of Fidel Castro is imminent. Importance of helping the process of democratic transition in Cuba. El Salvador could play a positive role in the process. It is important that programs and resources used to rebuild Cuba not be in

detriment of countries traditionally allied with the United States.

- Very worried about the implications of the trip of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Nicaragua and Ecuador. Prevent the formation of centers of terrorist indoctrination in Latin America and the development of nuclear technology.

- The Ortega Factor: Influence of the new Government in Nicaragua on the political stability of Central America and on the projection of regional integration and development. Take preventative action to avoid Venezuelan and Cuban influence in El Salvador that could recreate the instability of the 80's.

- Interference in internal politics and national security through covert financing hidden in energy projects. Evaluate the possibilities of cooperation to find alternative sources of energy to counter Venezuelan influence on countries dependent on the oil imports.

- Need for U.S. Foreign Policy to take integral, clear approach to help allied governments so that they can attend to their most pressing needs. Incentives for democracy through policies, programs, and assistance. Disincentivize anti-democratic regimes. Action not only by the U.S., but also coherent action by G-8 countries, financial institutions, international organizations and NGOs.

- Social violence, delinquency, and organized crime as the principal factors destabilizing El Salvador. The internal effect and the international image having serious repercussions on development goals.

Immigration Reform in the United States

- Topic of fundamental interest for Mexico and Central America. Strategic importance of the topic at a geopolitical level. Economic and social implications for El Salvador and destabilizing effects for the rest of the region.

CAFTA and Investment

- Importance of maximizing potential of free trade and foreign investment as mechanisms to increase job opportunities and help in the fight against poverty.

MCC

- Need to accelerate the disbursement of funds for the quick execution of projects. The speed of the plan's execution will determine its success.

13. (C) Comment: If President Saca's substantive paper is any indication, it appears fairly clear that he will raise with the President the specter of increasing Chavista influence in the hemisphere, and its implications for sustaining democracy in El Salvador. Saca is also likely to highlight the relationship he sees between the Chavez-Cuba-Nicaragua axis and potential growth of outside actors linked to international terrorism, especially Iran. In that vein, Saca may present himself and El Salvador as one of the few bulwarks of democracy in this sub-region, and, for that reason, deserving of special attention by the USG. This may include a call for special assistance and/or benefits to fight spiraling crime, including a new TPS extension and additional funds for the GOES anti-crime strategy.
Butler